



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Volunteers Will Bag Oyster Shells for Oak Island Restoration Project

OAK ISLAND – The N.C. Coastal Federation and Oak Island are recruiting volunteers for a final major push to fill 1,200 bags with oyster shells in one day for a shoreline restoration project on the island. Volunteers and students have already made almost 4,000 bags for the project to create an oyster reef and restore salt marsh habitat.

Volunteers will gather Tuesday, Aug. 14, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Waterway Park on Oak Island. Come join the federation and the town for a morning or afternoon shift of bagging oyster shells.

The project will ultimately lead to the creation of an oyster reef and restored salt marsh along the shoreline of the park. The reef and salt marsh will work as a living shoreline to slow down erosion while providing important habitat and water quality benefits. The town's Estuarine Stabilization Committee and Stormwater Department are helping with the project to promote the benefits of living shorelines, which use natural methods to control erosion.

Volunteers will fill mesh bags with oyster shells and limestone marl that will be used to create the new oyster reef. The town will supply a Bob-Cat to do the hard work, but many hands will be needed to cut, seal, lift and stack the bags. There will be a variety of activities to accommodate everyone's physical abilities.

This fall the bags will be placed in the water along the shoreline to form a low profile reef. Baby oysters will attach to the shells and eventually turn the bags into a living reef. Salt marsh plants will be planted behind the oyster reef to restore the marsh habitat. The town will be cleaning up debris from the shoreline to help with the project.

The oyster reef and marsh created through this effort will become valuable habitat for important species of commercial and recreational fish and shellfish. They will also improve water quality by filtering sediment and nutrients from the water.

Money for the project comes from the federal Estuary Restoration Act, a 2000 law that makes restoring estuaries a national priority. The Wilmington District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the federal sponsor for the project.

This event is suitable for all ages. Pre-registration is requested and can be done by visiting the federation's Events Calendar at www.nccoast.org. For more information contact Ted Wilgis the federation's coastal education coordinator at 910-509-2838 or tedw@nccoast.org or John Michaux, Oak Island's Public Works manager, at 910-201-8008 or jmichaux@ci.oak-island.nc.us.

About the North Carolina Coastal Federation: The N.C. Coastal Federation is the state's only non-profit organization focused exclusively on protecting and restoring the coast of North Carolina through education, advocacy and habitat preservation and restoration. Since its founding in 1982, the federation has worked with citizens to safeguard the state's coastal rivers, creeks, sounds and beaches and has protected or restored more than 50,000 acres along the state's coast. Its headquarters is in Ocean in Carteret County, between Morehead City and Swansboro, and it has regional offices in Wrightsville Beach and Manteo. For more information about the Coastal Federation visit www.nccoast.org.